

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
IO-13 ACDA-12 EB-08 DOTE-00 /094 W
-----064661 171106Z /11

R 171037Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5942
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 03021

USEEC, USOECD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRN, ELTN, GW, UR
SUBJECT: GERMAN/SOVIET TALKS ON TRUCKING

SUMMARY: IN FOUR DAYS OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THEIR SOVIET COUNTERPARTS, GERMAN TRANSPORT MINISTRY OFFICIALS EXPLORED POSSIBILITIES TO REDUCE THE MASSIVE IMBALANCE THE USSR NOW HAS IN TRUCKING GOODS BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS. CONCRETE STEPS INCLUDED AN AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO REDUCE ROAD USER FEES AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYSTEM TO REDUCE WAITING TIME FOR GERMAN TRUCKS AT THE SOVIET BORDER. LOW SOVIET TRUCKING RATES REMAIN, HOWEVER; AND AS LONG AS GERMAN FORWARDERS CONTINUE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SUCH LOW RATES, AND IGNORE THE HIGHER-COST GERMAN TRANSPORTERS (A SITUATION THE BONN GOVERNMENT CAN DO LITTLE ABOUT), RUSSIAN TRUCKS WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY MOST OF THE FREIGHT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

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1. FROM JANUARY 17-20, FRG TRANSPORT MINISTRY OFFICIAL DR. CHRISTIAN WOELKER LED A GERMAN DELEGATION WHICH DISCUSSED FREIGHT TRUCKING ISSUES WITH ITS SOVIET COUNTERPART TEAM, HEADED BY DIRECTOR KONDAUROV OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF THE SOVIET MINISTRY FOR TRAFFIC. FRG TRANSPORT MINISTER GSCHEIDLE AND USSR

MOTOR VEHICLE MINISTER TRUBIZYN AGREED TO THESE DISCUSSIONS DURING GSCHIEDLE'S OCTOBER 1977 VISIT TO MOSCOW.

2. THE FRG INTENDED TO HAVE THE MEETINGS, HELD IN BONN, EXPLORE WAYS TO REDRESS THE MASSIVE IMBALANCE BETWEEN FREIGHT CARRIED BY SOVIET AND GERMAN TRUCKERS. WOELKER SAID USSR TRUCKERS NOW CARRY 98.5 PERCENT OF THE 200,000 TONS CARRIED ANNUALLY IN BILATERAL TRADE, AND NOTED IT WAS NOT THE AMOUNT OF THE FREIGHT INVOLVED BUT THE PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY THAT WAS INVOLVED. HE TERMED THE DISCUSSIONS DIFFICULT BUT NOT HOPELESS.

3. ONE ACCOMPLISHMENT WAS THE SECURING OF SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO DRAW UP AN AGREEMENT MUTUALLY ABOLISHING THE CHARGE OF THE USSR ROAD USER TAX AND THE FRG MOTOR VEHICLE TAX FOR EACH OTHER (WOELKER NOTED THAT FRANCE AND AUSTRIA ALREADY HAVE SIMILAR PACTS WITH THE USSR). THE GERMANS SUGGESTED THAT UNTIL THE AGREEMENT IS SIGNED, THE SOVIETS REDUCE THEIR ROAD USER TAX TO THE GERMAN MOTOR TAX LEVEL. (A GERMAN TRUCKER ON A THREE-DAY TRIP IN THE USSR NOW PAYS DM 1,400 FOR CARRYING 24 METRIC TONS, WHILE THE SOVIET TRUCKER WITH COMPARABLE WEIGHT AND TIME PAYS APPROXIMATELY DM 480.) THE SOVIET DELEGATION THOUGHT THIS INTERIM SOLUTION WAS POSSIBLE AND PROMISED TO BRING IT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMPELIMED OFFICIAL USE

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TENT USSR AUTHORITIES. WOELKER POINTED OUT TO US, HOWEVER, THAT THIS INTERIM SOLUTION WOULD ALSO BE VALID

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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FOR BERLIN TRUCKS AND THUS INVOLVE THE BERLIN CLAUSE IN THE AGREEMENT. IF THE USSR BALKS AT SIGNING SUCH AN AGREEMENT, WOELKER SAID THE FRG IS PREPARED TO RAISE THE GERMAN MOTOR VEHICLE TAX TO THE LEVEL OF THE USSR TAX.

4. A SECOND ACCOMPLISHMENT WAS THE AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH A SYSTEM TO SHORTEN THE WAITING TIME OF GERMAN TRUCKS AT THE USSR BORDER. UNDER CURRENT PRACTICES GERMAN TRUCKS SIT AT THE BORDER FOR AS LONG AS THREE DAYS, AT A COST OF DM 1,000 PER DAY, WAITING FOR APPROVAL TO CROSS INTO THE USSR. UNDER THE NEW AGREEMENT THE GERMAN CARRIER MAY TELEX AHEAD FOR PERMISSION, SO THAT, THEORETICALLY AT LEAST, THE TRUCKER CAN CROSS THE BORDER AIMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER ARRIVAL.

5. WOELKER EMPHASIZED TO US THAT IN SPITE OF THESE GOVERNMENT-INDUCED IMPROVEMENTS, MANY OTHER FACTORS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WEIGHED HEAVILY AGAINST THE GERMAN TRUCKERS RECEIVING, OR EVEN WANTING, A LARGER SHARE OF THE BILATERAL FREIGHT BUSINESS. BAD ROADS, THE SCARCITY OF MAINTENANCE AND FUEL ACCOMODATIONS AND THE ABSENCE OF SUITABLE RETURN FREIGHT DISCOURAGE GERMAN TRUCKERS FROM SEEKING MORE TRANSPORTATION CONTRACTS FOR THE USSR. IN ADDITION, THE ALMOST CUT-RATE PRICES OF SOVIET TRUCKERS INDUCE GERMAN FREIGHT FORWARDERS AND SHIPPERS TO USE SOVIET TRANSPORT COMPANIES INSTEAD OF THE MORE EXPENSIVE GERMAN TRUCKING FIRMS. WOELKER ADMITTED THERE WAS LITTLE THE GOVERNMENT COULD DO, AT LEAST NOW, TO IMPROVE THIS MAJOR DIFFICULTY.

6. THE DELEGATIONS AGREED TO MEET AGAIN, WITH TIME AND PLACE TO BE ARRANGED LATER.

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